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East Timor

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Addendum

Political developments

1. The change in leadership in Indonesia on 21 May 1998, when Mr. B. J. Habibie took over the reins of the Government from President Suharto, was followed by renewed calls for an early solution to the issue of East Timor. Immediately after Mr. Suharto's resignation, the National Council of the Timorese Resistance (CNRT) called for the immediate and unconditional release of Xanana Gusmão and for the organization's "effective participation" in ongoing United Nations-sponsored talks between Indonesia and Portugal.[1] Student demonstrations were organized in Dili and Jakarta. On 10 June, more than 3,000 students gathered on the grounds of the University of East Timor calling for a full and free referendum.[2] On 12 June, more than 1,000 East Timorese protested at the Indonesian Foreign Ministry Office in Jakarta, calling for a referendum, the release of East Timorese political prisoners and the implementation of United Nations recommendations on human rights in East Timor. It was reported that police broke up the rally, herding people onto buses that were driven away under police escort. Three youths were reportedly injured, while three female students sought medical treatment at a Jakarta hospital. Military officials have confirmed that many were detained for questioning at a military camp in Cibubur outside of Jakarta.[3]

2. On 27 May 1998, Mr. Christopher Smith, Chairman of the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Human Rights met with Xanana Gusmão in the Jakarta prison. Mr. Smith said he had given President Habibie a letter signed by 15 members of Congress calling for political prisoners to be freed and a dialogue on the political status of East Timor. In Canberra, newspaper reports quoted Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer as saying that Gusmão's release would contribute toward resolution of the East Timor issues and that the East Timorese should be given "a much greater say in the management of their own affairs".[4] On 20 June 1998, a spokesperson for the Portuguese Foreign Ministry stated "it is indispensable that representatives of the people of the territory take part in negotiations with the Untied Nations and that its population takes part in an internationally supervised, democratic referendum".[5]

3. On 16 June 1998, security forces shot two East Timorese youths in Manatuto, about 63 miles east of Dili, as the two youths were loading wood into a truck. Herman das Dores Soares, age 21, died en route to the hospital. The following day, hundreds of students and youths seized the provincial assembly building in Dili protesting the killing and demanding that the Commission on Human Rights investigate the case. In Jakarta, some 400 East Timorese demonstrated at the Indonesian Justice Ministry. The

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military has publicly apologized for the shooting. *Agence France-Presse* quoted Col. Mudjino, deputy chief of the East Timor military command, as saying "I have ordered a thorough investigation. We have apologized to the family, to the bishop and the public in general". He added that the soldier was being questioned by military police and that action would be taken against him according to the law.[6]

4. At the European Union summit held at Cardiff, Wales, on 15 and 16 June 1998, the Cardiff European Council issued presidency conclusions which included the issue of East Timor. The document states:

> "The European Council discussed the implications of the present situation in East Timor. It recalls the importance of a just, global and internationally acceptable solution and reaffirms its support of the efforts being made under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General to that end. It further calls on Indonesia to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and calls for the release of all political prisoners, including those from East Timor, and agreed to continue to press for the early release of Xanana Gusmão. The European Council underlines the importance of continuing assistance to East Timor in accordance with the European Union's common position."

5. On 12 June 1998, 12 political prisoners were pardoned by President Habibie.[7] A total of 15 East Timorese political prisoners have been released since Mr. Habibie took over the presidency in May.[8] On 20 June, some 50 members of the East Timorese Students and Youth Association (Impettu) were allowed to visit jailed leader Xanana Gusmão on the occasion of his birthday.[9]

6. On 10 June 1998 at the United Nations, the Spokesman of the Secretary-General said that the Secretary-General was encouraged by the beginning of a more determined dialogue towards the resolution of the question of East Timor. He also welcomed the news that President Habibie had signed a decree for the release of 15 political prisoners and hoped that it would lead to the release of all other East Timorese political prisoners.[10] On 18 June, the Spokesman of the Secretary-General stated that Mr. Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, had met with the Secretary-General at the request of President Habibie. The Spokesman said Mr. Alatas had brought some important proposals on East Timor, which the Secretary-General had considered as "marking an important development in the process".[11]

7. The Indonesia news agency *Antara* quoted Mr. Alatas as stating that Indonesia was ready to grant "restricted partial autonomy" to East Timor. Excluded from such autonomy would be foreign affairs, finances, defence and security. Reports also stated that President Habibie had rejected a referendum request that had been made by an independence movement. Government officials in Jakarta argued that such a referendum would only sharpen the conflict between both sides of the East Timor independence issue.[12]

8. The visit of the European Union Troika to East Timor was marred by violence on 29 June, after a man was killed in a shooting incident. Reports indicate that the incident occurred when Indonesian intelligence agents following the envoys' convoy fired at a crowd of pro-independence demonstrators who had attacked their car, pelting it with rocks. At least five others were reportedly injured. Another death occurred on 28 June. Reports stated that Indonesian troops broke up a clash between opposing demonstrators trying to get to Dili to make their views known to the European Union ambassadors. The ambassadors from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Austria and the Netherlands decided to cut short their visit and returned to Jakarta. A statement issued by the United Kingdom said "we very much regret the death of Orlando Marcelino da Costa" and "we have asked the authorities to carry out a full investigation into the incident to ensure that those responsible are made accountable".[13]

Notes

[1] *Agence France-Presse*, 22 May 1998.

[2] *Associated Press*, 10 June 1998.

[3] *Associated Press*, 12 June 1998; *M2 Communications*, 16 June 1998.

[4] *International Herald Tribune*, 28 May 1998.

[5] *Agence France-Presse*, 20 June 1998.

[6] *Deutche Presse-Agentur GmbH*, 17 June 1998; *Reuters*, 17 June 1998; *Agence France-Presse*, 17 June 1998; *The Washington Post*, 18 June 1998.

[7] *Associated Press*, 12 June 1998.

[8] *Agence France-Presse*, 17 June 1998.

[9] *Agence France-Presse*, 20 June 1998.

[10] Daily press briefing of the Office of Spokesman for Secretary-General, 10 June 1998.

[11] Daily press briefing of the Office of Spokesman for Secretary-General, 18 June 1998.

[12] *Deutche Presse-Agentur GmbH*, 24 June 1998.

[13] *Agence France-Presse*, 30 June 1998.